The Girl with the Green Toque

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you would probably find me still here. I dropped out of action long ago. This is as good a place as any to see the world go by."

She poured what was left of the champagne into her glass, sipped it, and handed it to me. That was the way I left her,—no more words, no more hand shakings—I don't think we even said good by. But I have seen her often since, leaning against my desk or standing at the hearth,—the trim lithe figure in blue, the golden hair, and the bowed red lips always laughing and letting in a little sunshine to liven the daily grind.

I walked round the corner to the nearest hotel and dropped into the most comfortable chair I could find in the deserted lobby. Then I pulled out the visiting card from my overcoat pocket. "Mrs. George Hill Newman," it read, and in the left hand corner, "Tuesdays in November"; in the other, "Overbrook." I knew Overbrook as a suburb where many Philadelphians had their summer homes. I walked over to the operator at the switchboard and told him to get me Mr. George Hill Newman at Overbrook, Pennsylvania. Then I went back to my leather chair, lit a cigar, and waited. I suppose Newman must have been in bed; for I waited sometime. Indeed, I had begun to fear that no one would hear the telephone, when the operator called me, and I went into the booth.

"Is this Mr. Newman?" I asked.

"It is," came in a drowsy and very peevish voice. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing much," I said, a little nettled at my reception. "Marguerite is sailing tomorrow morning on the Deutschland at noon. I shall engage your passage, and you can find the tickets at the purser's office."

"Who the devil are you?" said the voice, which had apparently lost all its huskiness.

"A friend," replied I, "and a preserver of the hearth and home."

The answer was a very grating laugh.

"Don't ring off," I warned him, determined to deliver my message. "Please remember that I am paying for this, and if you continue to laugh like a hyena I shall have to pay two charges."

"Excuse me," said Newman; "but these bath slippers are very drafty."

"Your bath slippers are of no possible interest to me; but I do want to tell you that if you don't find Marguerite at first, stick to the ship, for she will be in hiding."

"All right," he shouted, apparently in great haste.

"And I don't mind saying editorially," I called as a parting shot: "This is your last chance for Marguerite."

Notwithstanding his extreme haste, I believe he would have made at least one more remark; but I rang off.

Smilingly I paid the fee, and smilingly took my key from the night clerk. There was not the slightest doubt in my mind that I had acted in a masterful manner. I was convinced that had I arranged for Newman to bring his wife back to Philadelphia, the old trouble could have only broken out afresh. The twelve days on the steamer would clear things up wonderfully, and I could safely trust the blue skies and the gray green hills of Italy to do what North Broad-st. never could or would do. And besides, the Lothario from the Quaker Belgravia would have time to fall in love with his own wife. Seldom have I slept with a conscience more at ease or awakened with a keener sense of content at a day's work well done.

I protest that it was curiosity pure and simple that prompted me the following day to go to the pier from which the Deutschland sailed. I had attended to the tickets and sent a basket of fruit and a bunch of roses, both properly inscribed to my friend of yesterday. My duty had been clearly performed; but about half past eleven I decided I was entitled to treat myself to one last glimpse at the girl who, after all, did owe me for something more than a night's lodging. Under ordinary conditions I started in ample time to reach the pier before they had hauled in the gang plank; but my trip was a succession of mishaps. Twice I was blocked by the traffic of the West Side streets, and then the ferryboat to Hoboken developed some internal trouble, and we drifted about in a perfectly foolish manner for many valuable minutes. As a result, I reached the wharf just as the boat was being warped about the far end of the pier. Pushing and fighting my way through the crowd of men, women, and children, all waving to their sea going friends, I finally reached the pierhead just as the Deutschland rounded into the main stream.

For some moments my eyes searched the double line of passengers ranged along the boat rail for the girl with the green toque, and then suddenly through the din of the noisy crowd I heard the low, silvery laughter of my friend. At her side a man leaned over the rail and laughed too, and waved his hat to me. We were near enough for our voices to have carried easily; but the happy situation did not seem to call for any particular remark, and so we continued to bow and wave and smile until the boat had reached mid stream and the two figures had fairly merged in the indistinct mass of their fellow passengers.

I stood for a long time after that, believing that I could distinguish the handkerchief of the girl still waving in the direction of the pier end. It must have been a long time; for when I turned I found that the crowd had vanished, and that I was quite alone. For a few moments more I remained leaning against one of the white posts, and following with my eye the great thin liner plowing her way through the smooth waters. Plowing her way to the Mediterranean—to Naples and Rome and to Florence and Venice—to the land of orange sunshine and smiles and love and pretty much all of the other beautiful things that the past has left us. They were starting on their second honeymoon, and I had done it; and I had been there only to wave them good by and God speed. Perhaps, after all, thought I, the bachelor has some niche in the world. Even if he does shun the real responsibilities imposed upon every man, there are certain moments in his monotonous, homeless life when he can make amends, even if it is to darn an occasional rent in the social fabric.

With a last look at the disappearing steamer, I turned, and as I did so I saw the tall figure of a man racing toward me. When he reached my side, he was quite out of breath, and leaned against a post, panting, with eyes fairly bulging out of their sockets, and the perspiration flowing from his brow.

"Is that the Deutschland?" he gasped at last, waving his hat in the general direction of the disappearing steamship.

"It is," I said. "Did you expect to meet it coming or going?" I did not like his face from the first moment I set eyes on it. He paid no heed to my remark; but sat down on the bulkhead and continued to fan himself violently with his hat.

"I don't suppose you happened to see a woman with a blue dress and a green velvet bonnet—very blond?"

"I believe I did see some one who answers to that description," I replied. "Do you know her?"

"Do I know her?" he repeated, still too warm to show much emotion. "She's my wife."

"Your what?" I gasped.

"My wife."

"She can't be your wife," I said, "because my lady with the green hat is Mrs. John Hill Newman of Overbrook, and her husband—"

"Wait a minute!" said the man, jumping to his feet. "Don't tell me he was on the boat too!"

I admit that I was becoming a trifle confused. "I think so," I said.

"Oh, you only think so," he sneered. "Well, you can tell him all right, because he has the meanest face in the world, and a brown derby hat and russet shoes."

"My man had a brown derby hat certainly, and russet shoes, perhaps; but I rather liked his face. Who are you, anyhow?"

"It's none of your business," he snorted; "but I happen to be one Johnson Jewett of Philadelphia, and the blond lady with the green bonnet is my wife."

"Pardon me," I said; "but could you tell me why your wife should carry around Mrs. John Hill Newman's visiting cards with her?"

"I could if I wanted to," said Jewett, gazing sorrowfully after the little black speck far down the bay. "She and Mrs. Newman always carry each other's cards to leave when they are making formal calls and the woman is out. What's that to you?"

"Nothing," I said.

"Do you suppose I could catch that steamer with a tug?"

"You might," I replied; "but it would only create a scandal. Better have them arrested on the other side."

My new friend sat down on the bulkhead again, and slowly wagged his head. "I don't want to get her arrested—I want to get her back home."

"All right," said I, the love of advice still strong within me, "why not get busy with the wireless?"

"Good!" he cried, jumping up and clapping his hat on his head. "Where can I find one?"

"Indeed, I don't know," I replied; but as he started up the pier I called after him, "And if you want my advice, don't save words; be a spendthrift for once in your life—tell her all about things at home."

He wheeled about, and for a moment gazed at me curiously, and then he turned toward the bay. "By golly!" he said with an apparent enthusiasm, "I will. I'll spend a whole lot. I think she's worth it."

"So do I," said I; but my friend did not hear me, for I only mumbled my words, and besides he was then trotting down the pier far beyond the reach of my voice.

The City Streets

There was a girl—a little girl!
It seems so long ago
Since her hand slipped from mine, and I
Was left alone with woe!

Her small white feet had prairie paths
But known, where grass was green,
And dandelions, dew diamonded,
Lent luster to the scene.

This word remains to mark the years
Since her sweet spirit fled.
"The city streets are wrinkled so
They're hard to walk," she said.

They're hard to walk, lost love of mine,
Without reproach or fear.
Did prescience of my present pain
In your rose days appear?

Or, may it be beyond the stars,
Before God's golden throne,
I'll know why I must tread to-day
The city streets alone.

—*Kate M. Cleary*